# Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

Federal agencies are required by the National Environmental Policy Act to evaluate all reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating those alternatives that were not studied in detail (40 CFR 1502.14). Alternatives not considered in detail may include, but are not limited to, those that fail to meet the purpose and need, are technologically infeasible or illegal, or would result in unreasonable environmental harm. The following alternatives were considered but were eliminated from detailed analysis:

## Limit Forest Openings to 40 Acres or Less

The proposed action analyzes in detail the effects of including even-aged regeneration harvest treatments that would create forest openings larger than 40 acres in size. Forest Service policy and the National Forest Management Act limits the size of openings created by even-aged silvicultural systems to 40 acres or less, unless Regional Forester approval is obtained to exceed that size (FSM R1 Supplement 2400-2001-2). For this project, we are seeking approval to create forest openings that exceed that size.

An alternative was considered that limited the size of potential openings to 40 acres or less. This alternative was proposed by the interdisciplinary team as a way to help determine if project goals and objectives could be achieved without exceeding the opening size restriction. This alternative was eliminated from detailed analysis because limiting openings to less than 40 acres would clearly not allow the realization of project goals related to forest patch size and pattern, hazardous fuels, and insect and disease hazard. It would not appropriately or effectively address the scale of current insect and disease hazard, or create ecologically desirable patterns of early seral structure, or provide persistent, effective wildfire threat reduction. Additional information and details related this this alternative and the preliminary analysis that contributed to its dismissal can be found in the project file and specialist reports.

## Maximize Vegetation Restoration Efforts

As part of the proposed action, we considered a site-specific forest plan amendment to maximize the vegetation restoration objectives of the project. Forest plan guideline FW-GDL- WL-13 states, "Management activities in elk management units should maintain existing levels of elk security (see glossary)." The proposed harvest may reduce vegetation to the extent that elk habitat security is decreased, which would not be consistent with the forest plan guideline to maintain existing levels of elk security. The long-term benefit of this proposed amendment for elk is the opportunity to be able to create greater amounts of early seral forage habitat over a broader area and in locations where elk are less vulnerable.

This alternative was eliminated from detailed analysis as it was determined that a 1.07 motorized trail closure in the elk management unit during hunting season would offset any loss of elk security within the project area, thereby eliminating the need for a site-specific forest plan amendment. Additional information and details related this this alternative and the preliminary analysis that contributed to its dismissal can be found in the project file and specialist reports.

## Intermediate or “Thinning Only” Treatments

Pervasive root disease and insect damage through all stands in the proposed harvest units would not lead to healthy stand conditions if thinning treatments or other intermediate treatments were pursued. This is because the existing tree species are susceptible to root disease, and thinning would accelerate the spread of root disease when those species are left. Intermediate harvest would not be effective because it would exacerbate root disease effects (through buildup in the stumps and root systems of the fungi that cause root disease), lead to heavy blowdown, and encourage advanced regeneration of grand fir and Douglas-fir.

Larger openings are needed to apply the silvicultural prescription recommended by the project silviculturist and national forest health protection personnel. Leaving patches of Douglas-fir, grand fir, and lodgepole pine would lead to further deterioration of the remaining stands. Since most of the stands are dominated by Douglas-fir and grand fir, which are inherently more susceptible to root diseases than western white pine or western larch, intermediate harvests are an untenable option. Furthermore, treating all the proposed areas at this time would allow us to store the road system for decades. If we leave some areas untreated to keep treatment units smaller, we would need to open roads and re-enter the area sooner to promote more resilient forest conditions. Additional information and details related this this alternative and the preliminary analysis that contributed to its dismissal can be found in the project file and specialist reports.